

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-14

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 HA-05 SY-05 CIAE-00 PM-05 H-01
INR-10 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 SP-02 SS-15
ICA-11 OPR-02 MCT-01 EB-08 TRSE-00 ACDA-12 MCE-00
IO-13 OMB-01 /115 W
-----024170 010613Z/10

R 311620Z MAY 78
FM AMEMBASSY SAN SALVADOR
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 8253
INFO AMEMBASSY GUATEMALA
AMEMBASSY MANAGUS
AMEMBASSY PANAMA
AMEMBASSY SAN JOSE
AMEMBASSY TEGUCIGALPA
USCINCSO QUARRY HEIGHTS CZ
DIA WASHDC

C O N F I D E N T I A L SAN SALVADOR 2716

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINT SHUM ES
SUBJ: EARLY WARNING MESSAGE FROM EL SALVADOR

1. AS THE SECURITY SITUATION GROWS MORE OMINOUS, THE
POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC FABRIC OF EL SALVADOR IS THREATENING
TO UNRAVEL.

2. CONTRIBUTING TO THIS SITUATION, AMONG OTHERS, ARE THE
FOLLOWING NEGATIVE FACTORS:

A. THE HARSH ECONOMIC REALITIES--WHICH MAY BE
WORSENING--OF A VERY SMALL AND OVERPOPULATED
COUNTRY;

B. CHRONICALLY SKEWED PATTERNS OF LANDHOLDING
AND ECONOMIC DISTRIBUTION;

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C. A HIGH LEVEL OF INTER-PERSONAL VIOLENCE AS
PART OF THE WAY OF LIFE;

D. A TRADITIONAL SYSTEM OF LAW ENFORCEMENT WHICH
IS AT VARIANCE WITH TODAY'S PRECEPTS OF HUMAN
RIGHTS;

E. GROWING UNREST IN THE COUNTRYSIDE AND AMONG
SOME ELEMENTS OF URBAN LABOR;

F. CONSTANT PRESSURE FOR SOCIO-ECONOMIC REFORM
AND HUMAN-RIGHTS IMPROVEMENT BY ACTIVIST
ELEMENTS OF THE OPPOSITION AND THE CATHOLIC
CHURCH;

G. POLARIZATION OF THE POLITICAL SCENE AND LACK
OF DIALOGUE AMONG THE PARTIES;

H. ABSENCE WITHIN THE POLITICAL SYSTEM OF NORMAL
OPPORTUNITIES FOR OPPOSITION AND DISSENT;

I. DIFFICULTY THROUGHOUT MUCH OF THE GOVERNMENT
IN DISTINGUISHING BETWEEN LEGITIMATE DISSENT
AND PRESSURE FOR ECONOMIC GAINS ON THE ONE
HAND AND SUBVERSION AND "COMMUNISM" ON THE OTHER.

3. AGAINST THIS BACKDROP, THE PAST YEAR OR MORE HAS
SEEN A MOUNTING LEVEL OF VIOLENCE. IN THE COUNTRYSIDE,
PRO-GOES ORDEN AND ANTI-GOES FECCAS AND UTC FIGHT FOR
PEASANT LOYALTIES. IN THE URBAN AREAS, THE BLOQUE
POPULAR REVOLUCIONARIO (BPR) AND TERRORIST GROUPS ARE
ACTIVE AND ALL SIDES SEEM TO BE ARMING THEMSELVES FOR A
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STRUGGLE WHICH THEY VIEW AS INCREASINGLY INEVITABLE
(SAN SALVADOR 2698).

4. THE CURRENT WAVE OF KIDNAPPINGS HAS FURTHER UNNERVED
THE GOVERNMENT AND SOCIETY OF EL SALVADOR. LACK OF ANY
PUBLIC ANNOUNCEMENTS ON THE SOL MEZA AND MENDEZ NOVOA
KIDNAPPINGS IS WIDELY INTERPRETED TO MEAN THAT THE
KIDNAPPERS ARE IN TOUCH WITH THE FAMILIES AND
NEGOTIATING FOR SIZEABLE RANSOMS WITH WHICH TO FURTHER
SWELL THEIR "WAR CHESTS." THE HIGHLY PUBLICIZED
POLITICAL DEMANDS LEVIED IN THE CASE OF JAPANESE
BUSINESSMAN FUJIO MATSUMOTO ARE CONSIDERED MORE OMINOUS,
QUITE POSSIBLY IMPOSSIBLE OF FULFILLMENT, AND PERHAPS
TANTAMOUNT FROM THE OUTSET TO A DEATH SENTENCE. ONE
SLIGHTLY MORE OPTIMISTIC VIEW HOLDS THAT THE KIDNAPPING
GROUP, FARN, AFTER EXTRACTING ALL POSSIBLE PROPAGANDA
VALUE FROM THE POLITICAL DEMANDS MIGHT RPT MIGHT SETTLE
FOR A MONETARY RANSOM.

5. THE FACT, HOWEVER, THAT MATSUMOTO REPRESENTS THE
FIRST FOREIGN BUSINESSMAN KIDNAPPED HERE, THE FACT
THAT HE IS THREATENED WITH IMMINENT "EXECUTION," AND

THE FACT THAT THE FARN SINGLED OUT THE US, GERMAN AND JAPANESE BUSINESS COMMUNITIES FOR PUBLIC CONDEMNATION HAVE HAD A STRIKING IMPACT UPON PSYCHOLOGY OF THOSE LOCAL RESIDENTS AFFECTED (SAN SALVADOR 2645). A GENERAL EXODUS OF FOREIGN BUSINESSMEN COULD EASILY COMMENCE, DEPENDING ON DEVELOPMENTS IN THE VERY NEAR FUTURE.

6. WERE SUCH AN EXODUS TO OCCUR, THE ECONOMIC IMPLICATIONS FOR EL SALVADOR ARE VERY SERIOUS. EMPLOYMENT LEVELS WOULD BE ADVERSELY AFFECTED, NEW INVESTMENT DISCOURAGED FROM COMING HERE, AND ANY HOPE OF SOLVING THE NATION'S ECONOMIC PROBLEMS THROUGH LABOR-INTENSIVE INDUSTRIALIZATION WOULD PROBABLY DISAPPEAR UNTIL SOME
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FUTURE ERA. GOVERNMENT AND BUSINESS LEADERS ARE PAINFULLY CONSCIOUS OF THESE RISKS.

7. THE POLITICAL FABRIC OF THE NATION IS ALSO UNDER STRAIN. THE GOVERNMENT IS BEING PRESSSED TO DO SOMETHING BUT DOES NOT KNOW WHAT TO DO. INADEQUATE INVESTIGATIVE CAPABILITY DENIES IT THE INTELLIGENCE ON THE BASIS OF WHICH TO IDENTIFY AND LOCATE THE TERRORIST GROUPS OPERATING AGAINST IT. PRESIDENT ROMERO IS BEING CRITICIZED AS A "WEAK" PRESIDENT. PROPONENTS OF LAW AND ORDER ARE ONCE AGAIN CRITICIZING UNITED STATES HUMAN RIGHTS POLICY FOR (A) ADDRESSING ITSELF TO FOREIGN SITUATIONS WHICH IT DOES NOT REALLY UNDERSTAND, (B) INHIBITING THE GOVERNMENT FROM DOING WHAT IT SHOULD TO PROTECT SOCIETY, AND (C) STIMULATING AND EMBOLDENING ACTIVIST GROUPS TO CHALLENGE THE PUBLIC AUTHORITIES. PRESIDENT ROMERO, FRUSTRATED AND LOSING HIS PATIENCE, MAY SOON BE DRIVEN BY THE DYNAMICS OF THE LOCAL SITUATION TO TAKE SOME ACTION WHICH WILL SEEM RESPONSIVE TO THE THREAT CONFRONTING HIM AND THE GOES. AS OF NOW, THE CHANCES ARE THAT HE WILL YIELD TO THE MOUNTING PRESSURES UPON HIM TO ACT MORE LIKE A "STRONG" PRESIDENT.
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Message Attributes

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